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BOOK REVIEWS

Report of the Educational Commission of the City of Chicago. Second edition, 184 pages. Price \$1.00. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

If education is indeed a science rather than an art, as is contended by many, then this report may be rightly called a scientific treatise.

In the annual report of the Board of Education of the city of Chicago for 1899, Dr. Andrews says: "One of the most important events of the year has been the report of the Educational Commission of the city of Chicago." He might with perfect fairness have made his commendation much stronger, and have adopted the language of Dr. Butler in his address before the National Educational Association at Los Angeles: "In my opinion the report of the Educational Commission of the City of Chicago is the most exhaustive and the most authoritative contribution that has been made to the literature of city school administration, and is the one quite indispensable book on the subject."

To fully appreciate the timeliness of Mayor Harrison's action in appointing this commission, and the far-reaching importance and value of the work accomplished by it, one must have studied the public-school system of Chicago in the class rooms of her public schools. Such an investigation could but have resulted in the earnest because intelligent endorsement of the mayor's own statement regarding the condition that led to his appointment of the commission.

In his letter to the city council asking authority to make such an appointment he says: "A change is needed, a change is essential in regard to the educational and the business conduct of the school system," and in the performance of the duty assigned them it was to those two sides of the public-school system, the *educational* and the *business*, sides that the commission directed their investigations.

Examination of this report shows that it well deserves to be called "exhaustive," for from the consideration in Article I, of the fundamental question, "The Organization of the Board of Education," it proceeds to the orderly and careful examination of every agency through which the public-school system is operative, and with the single and very evident purpose of securing greater efficiency in the general working of the system by simplifying its methods and concentrating official responsibility.

In the twenty articles into which the report is divided, each one of which has several subdivisions, such important topics as: "The System of School Supervision," "The Examination, the Appointment, and the Promotion of Teachers," "Special Studies," "Text-Books," "Ungraded Rooms and Schools," "Teachers' Institute and a Teachers' Library," are treated in the light of the widest experience, and not under the direction of mere theorists.

But such a report as this might be "exhaustive" and yet not be "authoritative." It is however because of its excellence in this latter particular that this report deserves to rank with the classics of public-school literature.

The report proper covers 184 pages, and these are about equally divided between the conclusions and recommendations of the commission and footnotes in which are condensed the views upon these most vital questions of fifty-four of the leading educators of the United States and Canada. Among these collaborators with the commission are thirteen presidents of universities and colleges of the first rank. Seventeen superintendents of public schools in the largest cities of the union, and twenty-four professors in universities, and other specialists in the science of education.

The report is supplemented by twelve appendices upon such important and up-to-date topics as "Public Kindergartens," "Vacation Schools and School Playgrounds," "Parental Schools," and Pupil Government," and in appendix K there is "A proposed school law for the city of Chicago," in which the commission has embodied much of its most important suggestions as require legislation to render them operative.

From first to last no topic is carelessly treated, and it would certainly be difficult for a student of the general subject of public-school management to find in any pedagogical library so valuable a treatise—it is more than a compendium—as is this report.

It was to be expected that a second edition would be called for, and it is with very reasonable satisfaction that the chairman of the commission now calls attention to the fact "that many of the most important suggestions made in the report of the commission have already been adopted by the board of education of the city of Chicago."

Almost every session of that body adds to the truth of that statement.

A. H. NELSON

CHICAGO

English: Composition and Literature. By W. F. WEBSTER, Principal of the East High School, Minneapolis, Minn. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

TO THE teacher accustomed to a systematic rhetoric and to a hand-book of English literature, Webster's *English: Composition and Literature*, will appear revolutionary. Disclaiming any purpose of writing a rhetoric, Mr. Webster attempts only "to teach methods of simple, direct, and accurate expression"; and in his literature work he includes much standard reading, but not a date, a biographical sketch, or an outline of literature. In short, he tries to embody practically the general reforms in English teaching which progressive thinkers demand.

The course outlined includes three years' high-school work, reserving the fourth year for the college-entrance requirements and for study of the development of English literature. The first year's work takes up narration and theme-structure; the second, description and paragraphs; the third, exposition and argument, with study of sentences and words. This arrangement, while arbitrary rather than logical, seems the best in practice. The reading is so arranged that narration shall be taught by Hawthorne and Irving, description by Ruskin and Stevenson, exposition by Macaulay and Newman, and argument by Webster and Burke.

This admirable scheme of uniting literature with composition is, in the first part of the book, very well carried out. Mr. Webster gives a clear elucidation of the principles of narrative and descriptive writing, enforced by very well chosen extracts from authors of repute. The discussion of plot, with the quotation from Stevenson, is particularly good. The suggestions for theme-writing, at the possible risk of producing a somewhat mechanical style, give the pupil a definite sense of knowing what is